Strengthening chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear security in the European Union – an EU CBRN action plan

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PURPOSE : Commission Communication on an ~Action Plan to on strengthen chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear security in the European Union – an EU CBRN Action Plan.

CONTENT : this Communication proposes an Action Plan in response to the risk of terrorist groups acquiring chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) materials. It notes the commonly held view that the risks involved are such, that coordinated action in terms of prevention, detection and response is indispensable. It is clear that no public authority can afford to ignore this threat given its potentially very significant consequences in terms of human life, and its economic effects.

Overall goal and core measures: the overall goal of the new CBRN policy is to reduce the threat from CBRN incidents, by way of a prioritised EU CBRN Action Plan, which involves all relevant stakeholders, including industry representatives. Coherence will be sought with relevant Community and CFSP instruments, in particular the Instrument for Stability, the INSC and the IPA, which pursue CBRN risks mitigation and preparedness outside the EU, as well as relevant Euratom treaty provisions and secondary legislation.

This goal will be achieved by concentrating efforts on minimising the likelihood of CBRN incidents occurring and limiting their consequences should they materialise. Some of the core measures to achieve these goals are:

- deploying a risk-based approach to CBRN security in the EU. This entails the use of risk-assessments to drive the prioritisation of security measures;
- pensuring that CBRN materials are well protected and the potential for their diversion is limited;
- strengthening the exchange of information between Member States on CBRN security issues in order to react more swiftly to emerging threats;
- improving the development and use of detection systems across the EU; and
- providing responders with the necessary tools to save lives and limit damage to property in case of CBRN incidents.

These aims will be achieved through the implementation of the 133 measures described in the EU CBRN Action Plan, which is part of the current policy package.

Main Areas of Work: the Action Plan envisages three main areas of CBRN security work:

- prevention - ensuring that unauthorised access to CBRN materials of concern is as difficult as possible;
- detection - having the capability to detect CBRN materials in order to prevent or respond to CBRN incidents;
- preparedness and response - being able to efficiently respond to incidents involving CBRN materials and recover from them as quickly as possible.

These three areas of work are supported by a number of horizontal measures, which are broadly applicable to all CBRN work.

Prevention: preventive measures constitute the main focus of activity of the CBRN Action Plan. This means that efforts should be concentrated on a limited number of vulnerabilities, which could be exploited for malicious purposes, on the basis of robust risk-assessment processes. Consequently, one of the first activities to be undertaken under the CBRN Action Plan should be the prioritisation of high-risk CBRN materials based on a thorough risk-assessment. This will be a prerequisite for many further measures targeted specifically at high-risk CBRN materials.

Subsequent actions will concentrate on the security of CBRN materials and facilities, control over CBRN materials, developing a high-security culture of staff, strengthening the identification of suspicious transactions and behaviours in relation to high-risk CBRN materials, improving the security of transport, information exchange, import and export regimes and strengthening cooperation on the security of nuclear materials.

Detection: detection capacity is an indispensable supplement to prevention and also crucial for ensuring an appropriate response to a CBRN incident, since without detection it is impossible to ascertain which materials were involved in the incident. Detection systems should be installed both at external borders and within each Member State. Proper and immediate detection may save thousands of lives and provide the necessary background for a proper response. EU level efforts concerning the use of detection equipment for CBRN materials will concentrate on developing minimum detection standards to be applied across the entire EU, establishing trialling, testing and certification schemes for CBRN detection and improving the exchange of good practices on the detection of CBRN materials.

Preparedness and response: further work should be undertaken in order to strengthen existing measures, in particular with regard to malicious CBRN incidents. Specific attention needs to be paid to CBRN emergency planning, strengthening countermeasure capacity, reinforcing information flows, developing better modelling tools and improving criminal investigation capacity.

Horizontal actions: the horizontal actions set out in the CBRN Action Plan concentrate on international cooperation, communication with the public, information tools, training, personnel security, research and criminalisation of CBRN acts.

Implementation: this should be taken forward primarily by way of existing structures. Although the EU Action Plan envisages the establishment of a small number of new working structures, these are mainly intended as temporary working arrangements, which have specific and time-limited goals.

In the field of **civil protection**, work will be taken forward under the Community Civil Protection Mechanism and the Civil Protection Financial Instrument to enhance preparedness for CBRN incidents. This includes workshops, training, exchange of experts, simulation exercises, scenario development and capability assessment. Further steps are required to increase EU CBRN response capability, notably by improving the availability of civil protection modules and exploring the need for new types of modules and the feasibility of pre-positioning key modules in the event of major public events. The different strands of work under the Mechanism will be streamlined through the launch of an EU CBRN Resilience Programme, bringing together the various civil protection activities included in the EU CBRN Action Plan and ensuring a consolidated contribution from the Civil Protection Mechanism to the overall implementation of this Action Plan.

In the health sector, an extensive framework has already been developed. The Health Security Committee and existing information exchange mechanisms such as the EWRS, RAS BICHAT and the RASFF will play an important role in the implementation of health related measures of the Action Plan.

The Commission will also establish and chair a CBRN Advisory Group.

Commission financial support: the main financial tools available to the Commission to support the implementation of the current policy package are the existing Financial Programmes, in particular the specific programme 'Prevention, Preparedness and Consequence Management of Terrorism and other Security related risks', as well as the specific programme "Prevention of and Fight against Crime". These specific programmes will cover the period until December 2013. The Annual Work Programmes of both financial programmes will specify the amounts available for the implementation of the current policy package. It is anticipated that up to EUR 100 million will be made available in support of the implementation of the CBRN Action Plan over the period 2010-2013.

Additional funding stemming from other programmes and instruments will also contribute to the CBRN Action Plan. These include the Civil Protection Financial Instrument, the Seventh Framework Programme and the EU Health Programme 2008-2013.

For cases where a CBRN incident has actually taken place, the Commission has proposed an expansion of the scope of the existing EU Solidarity Fund.

Lastly, the Communication examines the Action Plan in the context of the EU's external relations with particular reference to the EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, as well as relevant Community Instruments, in particular the Instrument for Stability.